



Childhood Obesity in Developing Countries

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KEYWORDS Obesity. Children. Developing Countries. BMI

ABSTRACT Childhood obesity is recognised as a global epidemic with morbid consequences such as peripheral and hepatic insulin resistance, increased blood pressure and plasma cholesterol, sleep-disordered breathing, and orthopaedic disorders of the hips and knees. In addition, there are psychosocial consequences of obesity such as social isolation, dissatisfaction with body shape, low self-esteem and lower educational attainment. Whilst obesity has been accepted as a problem in developed, industrialised societies, it is now becoming evident that the prevalence of obesity amongst children in developing countries is increasing significantly. This paper reviews the evidence for childhood obesity in developing countries and discusses why the prevalence is increasing rapidly. In developing countries that are going through an economic and nutritional transition the population becomes rapidly urbanised and adopts the dietary and physical behaviour patterns common to the developed world; a high fat, high energy, low fibre diet and inadequate amounts of regular physical activity. This combination inevitably leads to childhood and adult obesity that results in increased morbidity and mortality.

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Human Ecology Special Issue No., 13: 53-59 (2005)

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